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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for planning and operating a Senior Colleague Advisory Network (SCAN) team visit are presented, based on the experiences of participants in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) SCAN project. Guidelines for the institution cover: determining the need for a consulting visit, the need for presidential involvement, defining and communicating the visit's purpose, choosing team members and dates, previsit contact with team members, the initial meeting, and the structure of sessions. Guidelines for visiting colleagues are also included. The prime objective of each consulting visit is to provide assistance to an AASCU institution by a team of colleagues to help clarify an institution's mission in conjunction with a decline in institutional resources. SCAN teams help institutions facilitate the establishment or refinement of internal goals and plans. In addition to suggestions offered the host institutions by the SCAN team, the visits provide an opportunity for university officials to meet and exchange views with senior colleagues from other institutions. Included are a sample schedule for the actual colleague visit and a list of the sequence of activities by the host institution, including the preparation for the visit. (SW)

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Guidelines
Senior Colleague Advisory Network

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

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GUIDELINES

Senior Colleague Advisory Network

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American Association of State
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PROLOGUE

Experience has long been recognized as a powerful teacher. Even though each of us may learn well from our individual experiences, our ignorance would perhaps remain unmanageable without the immense help that comes through vicarious experience. Thus, the collective experience of those who are similarly situated is a well-spring that can and should be tapped again and again. This is especially true for those at top levels of academic administration.

For these reasons, AASCU presidents and academic vice presidents have long been interested in ways of tapping this reservoir of knowledge gained by their colleagues. During a meeting on the subject, those in attendance rejected the idea of referring to one another as consultants. They saw themselves rather as colleagues who could provide one another seasoned, knowledgeable advice without the "pride of authorship" that the name consultant seems to imply. Recognizing themselves as a network of colleagues at senior levels of administration, they believed that advice and counsel could be given and received in a climate of mutual respect and careful inquiry. Thus, the concept of Senior Colleague Advisory Network (SCAN) came into being.

Generous support from the Ford Foundation made possible the opportunity to test the concept and its systematic operability. The guidelines that follow, we believe, are testimony to the worthiness of the endeavor. More important, however, is the conviction gained from the project that the network needs to be continued and maintained. These guidelines are intended to show how we can and shall respond to that need.

Harold Delaney
Executive Vice President
AASCU

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist both visitors and campus-based individuals who are involved in planning and conducting a Senior Colleague Advisory Network (SCAN) team visit. The ideas presented here are drawn from the experiences of individuals who participated in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' SCAN project, an activity funded in part by a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation.

In the following pages specific guidelines are presented for successful SCAN team visits. The content of the guidelines is based entirely on comments and observations recorded during the Ford Foundation-funded SCAN visits.

Most of the suggestions are for the institution's use in first planning and then hosting a SCAN team; however, the guidelines also address ways team members can be most helpful and effective on an institutional visit. Guidelines for both the institutions and visiting team members appear in this single publication so that both parties can become familiar with the entire scope of roles and responsibilities related to a SCAN team visit. Following the guidelines is a section on the expected outcomes of a SCAN team visit.

GUIDELINES FOR THE HOST INSTITUTION

Determining the Need for a Consulting Visit

For a SCAN-team visit to be successful, the institution must know what kind of help it needs, in what areas, with what expected outcomes, and which institutional personnel it intends to involve in the effort.

Institution-wide commitment to the SCAN-team visit from president on down is essential. Unless the purposes of the visit are carefully formulated and widely understood by major institutional decision-makers, the visit is likely to be of little value.

In some cases, it is conceivable that an institution knows it needs assistance but is unsure in what area or areas it can best benefit from colleague guidance. The SCAN team can play a valuable role in such a situation, but only if both institution and team members initiate the visit aware of its extremely open-ended nature.

Need for Presidential Involvement

The involvement of the institution's chief executive officer (CEO) in every stage of the SCAN team visit is absolutely essential. Without strong support and personal involvement in the visit from the president or chancellor, the team members will have reason to wonder why they were asked to visit in the first place and whether any of their advice and suggestions stand any possibility of being implemented. Furthermore, if university administrators and faculty perceive a lack of genuine interest by the CEO in the work of the team, there is a strong chance they will believe the team is on campus for reasons other than those expressed for the consulting visit. If visiting team members must continually explain why they are on campus and what they are trying to accomplish, valuable time will be wasted and the entire exchange will suffer from a lack of trust and honesty. The CEO of the visited institution should not only be perceived as totally backing the visit, but should also be personally sincere and open about his or her reasons for inviting the visitors. This point is extremely important to the success of a SCAN team visit.

Defining and Communicating the Visit's Purpose

Institutions are encouraged to consider using the services of a SCAN team in whatever ways will best suit their individual circumstances. Teams may be catalytic agents or they may be problem solvers; the scope of their work may be institution-wide or it may be focused in a particular area. Although there is no single best use for a SCAN team, it is very important that its charge be well thought out and defined.

The host institution should try to strike a balance between being too specific and being too open-ended in defining what it would like its visiting team to accomplish. Obviously, the host institution will want to be somewhat open-ended in the definition of a team's charge, so that no team member feels that the institution is trying to predestine or control eventual outcomes and conclusions. Nevertheless, the more specific an institution can be in detailing what it would like from the team, the greater are the chances that the team members chosen will be effective and will work hard on their task.

In terms of communication within the institution, a preconference warm-up for institutional personnel should be held before the team arrives. It is crucial to make sure that institutional participants know why the team is coming. Any good suggestions made by the team members are more likely to be implemented if the people on campus understand the need for external assistance. At the very least, involving institutional participants in some of the planning for the visit makes the situation less threatening and encourages more openness. The visited institution may also want to consider a postconference follow-up soon after the team's visit. One purpose of this could be to review the suggestions made by the visiting team and to discuss ways of implementing appropriate ones.

The main feature of the consulting visits is their nonthreatening, nonevaluative nature. No written reports are expected of the team. The host institution, therefore, has every reason to be as open and candid as possible and to communicate a willingness to have the team raise sensitive issues and discuss them openly. Neither party has a vested interest, a situation far different from either an accreditation visit or a paid consultation, so problem solving is the *only* agenda.

Choosing Team Members and Dates

Choosing team members for the SCAN visit is a collaborative effort involving both the host institution and AASCU. After the institution has decided how it plans to use a colleague team and any special qualifications the team members should have, AASCU will provide from its files a list of eight to ten individuals to the institution. The host institution can then reject any of the suggested individuals, and it can also specify anyone it would particularly like to have included as a visiting team member.

The pool of potential team members that AASCU maintains will be limited to presidents, chancellors, academic vice presidents, and academic vice chancellors of AASCU institutions, as well as individuals who formerly served in these roles. Beyond particular specifications of the host institution, AASCU will try to provide a variety of personalities and experiences from institutions of different sizes and geographic locations. A team of three or four individuals seems to work best: the intensive interaction of the consulting visit is simply too exhausting for just two team members to handle and having more than four team members begins to present logistical problems for the host institution. AASCU will also make an effort to include at least one team visitor who has either hosted or participated in a previous SCAN visit.

In the course of the selection process, the host institution should provide to prospective team members as much information as possible about what it expects from the visit. In this way team members can assure themselves that they can make a significant contribution.

The host institution should try to schedule a SCAN team visit at a time when there are no other major events going on, such as graduation or the visit of an accrediting body. The visit should be long enough to allow the team to become reasonably well acquainted with the institution but not so long that it extends beyond its original purpose. A visit of about two days seems to work best.

Previsit Contact with Team Members

After selected team members have agreed to serve and all dates have been settled, it is a good idea for the president or chancellor of the host institution to contact the individuals in order to welcome them, ensure that they know who the other team members

are, review the purposes and expected outcomes of the visit, make preliminary travel and lodging arrangements, and provide some relevant background materials on the institution. The focus of the visit will, in large part, determine what materials should be sent; some of the following are suggested.

- the last regional accreditation report
- the current catalog
- a personnel policies document
- the institutional fact book
- the organization of the state higher education system
- a statement of the university's governing structure
- admissions information
- planning and budget documents
- enrollment trends
- the faculty handbook
- the faculty collective bargaining agreement (if applicable)
- institutional staffing patterns
- the latest faculty senate minutes

Between the time the materials are sent and the start of the visit, the CEO should personally call each of the team members to see if there are any questions about aspects of the visit or the supporting materials. This gesture also provides an opportunity to summarize for the team the institution's concerns and perceived problems. By sharing this information with the team members prior to their arrival on campus, the CEO will facilitate more focused dialogue and greater team effectiveness.

Initial Meeting

When the team members arrive on campus, there should be an introductory meeting with the president or chancellor, his or her executive staff, and any others who may be particularly involved in the consulting team visit. The specific purpose of the session with the president or chancellor is for the CEO to communicate his or her expectations as outlined in the material previously sent to the team and to develop with the team ways the intended purposes of the visit can be met.

Structure of Sessions

The host institution should remember that a visit of two or three days enables the team members to get a good overview of the campus situation without becoming so deeply involved in the institutional setting that the valuable external perspective they bring is diminished.

There is often a temptation to segment the team members into meetings and interviews along particular areas of expertise. Although the benefits of this approach cannot be denied, the institution as a whole will be better served if the team is kept together for all sessions. In this way the host institution enjoys the true benefits of team observation and advice: the same situation is observed, thought through, and discussed by more than one individual, thereby increasing the number of perspectives on an issue and decreasing the chances of one, perhaps prejudiced, assessment.

While it is necessary to allow free time in the visitors' schedules, it is also important to provide ample time for the team to work and to discuss their findings with institution officials. Social events are not essential.

A combination of meetings (for example, interviews with two or three individuals, discussions with five or six people, and sessions with up to 15 to 18 participants) works well and tends to keep the visitors refreshed. Depending upon the issue the host institution wants examined, the schedule should offer a wide breadth of faculty and administrative contact. A sample visit schedule appears in Figure 1.

Since the visiting team members come to the institution not to lecture but to make suggestions based on their own experiences, the sessions should be structured to facilitate such exchanges. A relaxed, informal dialogue produces the best results. When both visitors and participants have an opportunity to ask questions of one another, the resulting exchange of views not only effects a constructive dialogue but also insures that matters of concern are being addressed and that both parties are interested. Visitors' sessions with both individuals and groups should maintain enough of an open-ended, flexible nature to give maximum time to areas of special concern, ones that may simply appear out of the conversation. Finally, the involvement of the CEO in introducing the participants at as many of the sessions as possible will stress the importance of the team's work.

Figure 1. A Sample Schedule for a Colleague Consulting Visit

Date	Place	Event
Monday		
4:30 – 5:00	Chancellor's Conference Room	Orientation session with Chancellor
6:30	Chancellor's Home	Dinner with Chancellor and staff
Tuesday		
9:00 – 11:00	Alumni Hall	Provost, Associate Provosts, Council of Deans
11:00 – Noon	Chancellor's Conference Room	University Planning Committee
Noon – 1:30	Cafeteria Annex Conference Room	Luncheon with faculty representatives
1:30 – 3:00	Chancellor's Conference Room	Meeting with Directors and Deans of Registration, Records, Financial Aid, Graduate Studies, and Student Affairs
3:00 – 4:00	Health Center Conference Room	Faculty Senate Executive Committee
Wednesday		
9:00 – 10:00	Chancellor's Conference Room	Exit Interview with Chancellor's Staff
10:00 – 11:00	Chancellor's Conference Room	Exit Interview with Chancellor
Departure		

What to Expect, What Not to Expect

A final "debriefing" exit interview with the team can be especially helpful to the institution. Its value will depend upon who is present and, in some cases, who is not present. It should be remembered that in situations where an institution calls in a team to examine general areas or topics where specific solutions are not easily defined, the contributions of the team members will be somewhat difficult to evaluate. In all situations, though, the team is not so much expected to supply answers as it is to serve as a catalyst for significant conversations on important institutional concerns.

GUIDELINES FOR THE VISITING COLLEAGUES

Preparation for the Colleague Visit

The best preparation one can make for a SCAN visit is to read carefully the background materials sent by the host institution and to be familiar with the general purposes of the campus consultation.

Prior to the campus visit, the host institution will have told each team member who the others are. It is suggested that the members contact one another before arriving on campus in order to introduce themselves and to set a time and place for meeting before their formal arrival on campus. The purpose of such a meeting is for the team members to acquaint themselves with each other and to share perceptions of what each believes the team is to accomplish. Along with devising a common understanding of the team's role, the team members may at this time decide to choose a team leader whose major responsibility will be to begin and facilitate discussions.

On the Visit

Upon arrival on campus, the team members will first meet with the president or chancellor and selected others from the host institution. The team's work on campus will take much of its direction from this meeting's discussions. The anticipated outcome of the initial meeting is that both team and host institution reach a mutual understanding about the purpose of the colleague visit and about what sort of assistance the president or chancellor expects from the team.

From this point and throughout the campus visit, it is important that the team members maintain a sense of flexibility. There will be times when the host institution thinks it knows what it needs while it is unconsciously ignoring some greater obstacle, seen clearly only by outsiders. For this reason, effective team members should not only pay close attention to the expressed needs of the institution but should also rely on their own observations and judgments to gather a wider perspective on the institution's situation. Team members should not be either surprised or disappoint-

ed if what they discuss with the president or chancellor before leaving campus bears little resemblance to what was outlined at the initial meeting.

The general rule of thumb for a SCAN team visitor is to view an institution on its own terms and relate one's overall knowledge to the particular institutional situation. In an open-ended collegial format, potential problems arise if the visiting team comes on too strongly in the initial stages and seems to imply that the incompetence of the institution's officers has contributed to a troubling situation. Visitors should not lecture about what or what not to do. Rather, they should listen carefully to the assessment of the institution and move the discussions forward by bringing in references to experiences at their own institutions. Private interaction of the team prior to each day's visit, for example, at breakfast, as well as continual consultation during the day is a good way to develop a cohesive approach in dealing with campus situations and individuals.

It is important for the team members to be relaxed and informal in their discussions with individuals at the host institution. Although the overall purpose of the SCAN visit as formulated by the president or chancellor will be specific, the sessions with campus groups and individuals should be open-ended. This will allow questions to be raised with ease by both the team and campus participants.

Throughout the campus discussions, it is important for the visiting colleagues to project an open, nonjudgmental attitude. The tone of the entire visit should be such that institutional participants feel free to ask the kinds of questions they worry about asking their own colleagues. It is also important for the visitors to remember that campus participants need an opportunity to listen to one another.

How to Be Most Effective

If three characteristics could be specified for SCAN team members, they would be wisdom, tact, and sensitivity, followed closely by the ability to be a receptive listener. To serve on a team, one must want to be helpful to and supportive of the institution.

There are no written reports required of the visiting team. The work of the team occurs entirely within the time of the visit and

necessitates team members full participation in the scheduled meetings and sessions. A team member should therefore plan to devote total attention to the project throughout the visit.

Team members should not be concerned if they are unable to solve campus problems, for they play a key role simply in providing an opportunity for significant conversations to occur on important institutional concerns. Team members come not to perform miracles but to make suggestions, to give reassurances, to help the members of the host institutions' faculty and administration understand that their difficulties are shared throughout American higher education.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The SCAN visits successfully demonstrate the extraordinary value of sharing experience and insights with others.

Institutional Assistance

The prime objective of each consulting visit is to provide assistance to an AASCU institution by a team of colleagues in areas both general and specific but related to clarification of an institution's mission in conjunction with a decline in institutional resources or ways to best use existing limited resources.

The nature of the assistance can take a number of forms. At some of the visited institutions, the major contribution will be in recognizing that problems are not unique to any one campus. The value of this help comes from listening to individuals who have previously worked with a troubling campus problem and who can therefore help an institution understand that the problem occurs elsewhere and can be solved. Much information dissemination takes place through the sharing of anecodotal experiences and give-and-take discussions. At times the colleague team provides a good reason for the visited institution to conduct open-ended discussions with a wide variety of people on campus such as faculty and administrative officers who do not have the opportunity of traveling to other institutions to gather ideas.

SCAN teams help institutions facilitate the establishment or refinement of internal goals and plans. Knowledgeable visitors from the outside exercising professional objectivity are valuable because such neutrality allows their perceptions to be considered more openly than is often the case when all participants are from the "inside." Teams help sharpen the focus on both the needs of the institution and strategies by which the needs might be addressed.

In general, the more specific the issue of concern for a SCAN team, the more likely it is that concrete strategies can be explored. Learning from the experiences of others avoids the possibility of "reinventing the wheel." With more general issues, informed and "neutral" colleague team visitors contribute a great deal by helping

an institution internally crystallize its perceptions. SCAN teams can articulate to faculty their interpretation of what the administration thinks the concerns are and can also tell the administration what some of the faculty concerns are.

The nature of the colleague team's assistance is frequently more indirect than immediate. Often, a major contribution is in setting a context for further discussions with university personnel. Team visits can stimulate thinking at various levels and utimately lead to the planting of ideas throughout the institution which, if not fruitful immediately, nevertheless have the potential of stirring creative thought. It is not unusual to hear that issues continue to be discussed on campuses after the teams have departed.

Free Sharing of Ideas

In addition to specific advice and suggestions offered the host institutions by the SCAN teams, the visits themselves provide an opportunity for university officials to meet and exchange views with senior colleagues from other institutions. The visits offer time for intensive, yet friendly exposure to counterparts at different institutions, and the experience of long hours of conversation about problems in higher education and in individual institutions is invaluable. The open-ended discussions that characterize the colleague team visits enable both host and visitors to solicit ideas and understandings on several issues that are often only tangentially related to the visit.

The nonevaluative and informal nature of the SCAN visits is an extremely important element in their success. In such an atmosphere, difficult problems and sensitive issues can be discussed openly with various possible solutions and viewpoints considered.

Insight Gained by Visitors

Benefits very definitely accrue to the members of visiting SCAN teams. The opportunity to study the problems of another university in depth affords a different context from which visitors can view their own institutions.

Visitors have an opportunity to absorb much information for use at their home campuses not only from their host but also from

other team members. The experience of consulting with peers from other institutions can point out a great deal about one's own institution and is likely to suggest some possible new directions. Both parties to a SCAN team visit are thereby enriched: the host institution which gains from the visitors' knowledge and insight and the team members themselves by the ideas they take back to benefit their own institutions.

CHRONOLOGY OF A SCAN VISIT

The following summarizes the sequence of activities by the host institution, SCAN team members, and AASCU in planning and carrying out a SCAN visit. It also provides a general idea of the amount of time involved in necessary preparations for a visit.

Preparation for the Visit

–8 to 10 weeks before visit–

- Institution identifies its concern and the kind of assistance it would like from a SCAN team.
- Institution contacts AASCU.

–7 to 9 weeks before visit–

- From its files, AASCU identifies potential team members with knowledge, skills, and experience in institution's area or areas of concern.
- AASCU submits a list of names to institution.

–6 to 8 weeks before visit–

- Institution identifies to AASCU preferred team members and dates for visit.

–4 to 7 weeks before visit–

- Acting as a broker, AASCU extends invitations to preferred team members.
- Individuals accept or decline.
- AASCU presents final roster of team members to host institution.

–2 to 3 weeks before visit–

- Host institution contacts each team member and forwards appropriate institutional information materials.
- Team members make their own travel arrangements.

Visit Takes Place

Follow-up to Visit

- Team members submit travel expenses to AASCU.
- AASCU reimburses visiting colleagues.
- AASCU bills host institution for consultants' expenses and AASCU's administrative role.
- Both team members and host institutions submit informal evaluations to AASCU.